

"You are very good," he said, without looking at her. "I have come straight from her to you. I found her poor, and sick, and alone. The story of the past ten years she has not told me, but I can guess what it must have been. She has forgiven me—she loves me still—I can say no more. I told her I would see you this once and never again, and I will keep my word."

He did not lift his head—his arm was thrown over the mantel, he leaned heavily against it, his face white and drawn. She drew a long, shivering breath, then went up close to him.

"You will devote your life to her—you will forget our brief dream? You will make her happy—you will redeem the past?"

"God helping me, I will!"

"And I," Estelle said, very gently, very sadly, "will pray for you both. Some day, years and years from this, when your heart is all hers, when I am but a memory and a shadow, we may meet and laugh over our old folly. Our heads may be silvered, our faces withered and old, but the time will come."

"The time will never come." He lifted his head, and his strong, dark eyes met hers full and clear. "Never, and you know it! I will do my duty by my wife, but *you* I will never forget! But with you it is different—young, and beautiful, and free, the image of the man who so wretchedly lost you need not blight your life. We may meet when you are a happy wife—not before."

"Then we will never meet," she answered, quietly. "I am a De Montreuil, and I keep my word. Good-bye, Alwyn Bartram," she held out her white hand, "and forever! You go to Italy—I to France. We may never cross each other's paths again; but let us remember there is still another land where all may meet, and where partings come no more. There, *mon ami*," the white hand pointed upward, "is the true *patrie*. Farewell!"

She stooped, kissed the hand that lay cold and still in hers, and flitted from the room.

A subtle odor of perfume lingering behind—the echo of the softest, sweetest voice woman ever owned—were all that remained to him of the peerless Estelle.

He stood still—motionless as the marble against which he leaned—his face bowed upon his arm. Very mourn-